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ABSTRACT

A three-fold exploratory analysis of teaching excellence is presented, encompassing diverse perspectives on excellence, the mission of the university, and the curriculum development process. Ideas about teaching excellence are drawn from the literature of pedagogy and philosophy, and desirable teacher characteristics are cited: commitment to the profession, humaneness, ability to communicate, ability to reason, ability to advise and counsel, time invested in the profession, organization and direction, a multi-cultural perspective, subject-area knowledge, quality teaching style, and flexibility. The mission of the university, as expressed in early education literature, is explored. It is concluded that the university's new mission is pluralistic, international in scope, and must focus on preservation and enhancement of quality and diversity, advancement of social justice and constructive change, more effective governance, and more effective use of resources. The curriculum development process is described as one that, if well designed, could be the catalyst for achievement of this diverse mission. Faculty confidence and faculty productivity are viewed as essential factors in both resolving problems of university personnel and developing teaching excellence. A brief bibliography is appended. (MSE)

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EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING: WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN?

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Introduction

The topic of this paper has been a question of concern to academicians for millennia. It is of pressing concern to academicians today also; primarily, because the standard of excellence is the proposed measuring stick to be used more stringently in colleges and universities for granting tenure and full professorships[1] to deserving faculty. The definitions of what constitutes excellence in teaching have not been clearly delineated. Lack of specific information on evaluating teaching excellence, therefore, sometimes masquerades as a hidden agenda which confounds the basic problem (meeting the needs of students, society and the disciplines) of teaching faculty. Also, the lack of specific information on evaluating excellence provides too much leeway for disparity in individual interpretations. A clear-cut set of descriptors for excellence could eliminate some of the unnecessary anxieties of faculty. The elimination of anxieties could possibly manifest itself in more faculty confidence and more self-actualized teachers.

This paper presents a three-fold exploratory analysis on teaching excellence. The first discourse examines diverse perspectives on excellence

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[1]John S. Toll, "Rewards To Stimulate Faculty Excellence", in National Forum, Spring 1980, Vol. 60, p. 3.

in an effort to provide descriptors. The second discourse provides perspectives on the mission of the university; and finally, the curriculum development process is examined as a process which, if well defined, could serve as a catalyst to ensure the desired end result.

Perspectives On Excellence

Excellence has been explored from diverse philosophical and educational perspectives. Aristotle approached the subject of education and excellence from a Realists point of view. He said that "Man's greatest happiness is in possessing excellence or perfection of any kind. The most important kind of excellence is that of being a truly humane person, a genuinely reasoning being."[2] Extensions of Aristotle's themes on humaneness and reason surface in works of Maslow,[3] Rogers,[4] Kelley,[5] and Coombs and Snygg.[6]

Pine and Boy view the desirable qualities in teachers resulting from

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[2]Robert S. Brumbaugh and Nathaniel M. Lawrence, "Aristotle: Education As Self-Realization," in Philosophers On Education: Six Essays On The Foundations Of Western Thought (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963), pp. 49-75.

[3]Abraham H. Maslow, Motivation And Personality (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1954).

[4]Carl R. Rogers, On Becoming A Person (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961).

[5]Earl C. Kelley, Education For What Is Real (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947).

[6]Arthur W. Coombs and Donald Snygg, Individual Behavior: A Perceptual Approach To Behavior (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1959).

an "Expanded Person"[7] mindset. The Expanded Person's behavior reflects humaneness and soundness of reason. These qualities are an outgrowth of the teacher's "psychological wholeness and deep respect for the learner."[8] Behaviors which reflect the Expanded Person's qualities to become an effective teacher are: "Respect for students; The ability to develop effective communication in the classroom; A person who accepts students; A person who concentrates on the needs, problems and feelings of students; and a teacher who is also permissive (permissive meaning freedom to have ideas, beliefs, values - permission to be oneself and to pursue interests and curiousity in search of meaning in life)."[9]

Very little attention has been paid to the quality of teaching on the university level.[10] However, a review of the literature suggests that some attempts have been made to identify desirable qualities for excellence. The teaching proficiency or lack thereof of the university teacher has been questioned. Schwartz suggests that the problem of the professional teacher is complicated by the fact that he was never trained for his job.[11] He further says that "Most university teachers are turned loose upon their students without any formal recognition that teaching is an art that requires its own knowledge and skill."[12] Hutchins, on the other

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[7]Angelo V. Boy and Gerald J. Pine, Expanding The Self: Personal Growth For Teachers (Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1971), p. 6.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[10]William Schwartz, "Education In The Classroom", in The Journal Of Higher Education (May/June 1980), Vol. 51, p. 236.

[11]Ibid., p. 235.

[12]Ibid.

hand, stressed the belief that one learns by doing. He said, "All there is to teaching can be learned through a good education and being a teacher."[13] Nevertheless, methods of teaching are becoming more important in the minds of many who will be judged on their teaching effectiveness.

Areas upon which teaching success is contingent were identified by Rippa. Those areas are: a cluster of positive personality components; a broad background of general education deemed important for all citizens; a specialization in depth in all subject areas which are to be taught; and a range of professional competencies and skills necessarily acquired before admission into the ranks.[14]

Some professionals have associated excellence in teaching with a charismatic teaching style. Soper suggests that teachers with a charismatic style may be very entertaining but actually teach very little to students.[15] Other educators suggest that effective teaching must assure that learning is an active rather than a passive experience.[16] Yoakum and Simpson however, identified characteristics associated with good teaching. They suggested that good teaching involves skill in guiding learning; subject matter that is well planned; a teacher who is kindly and sympathetic; a teacher who is cooperative; a teacher who is suggestive; a teacher who is democratic; a teacher who is stimulating; a teacher who takes into account

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[13]Robert Maynard Hutchins, The Higher Learning In America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936), p. 56.

[14]S. Alexander Rippa, Education In A Free Society (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1976), p. 345.

[15]Barlow Soper, "Can Students Evaluate Teaching Effectiveness?" in National Forum (Spring 1980), Vol. 60, p. 20.

[16]R. A. Oliver, Effective Teaching (Don Mills: J. M. Dent & Sons Canada Limited, 1956), p. 4.

students' past experiences; a teacher who is progressive; a teacher who diagnoses difficulties; a teacher who permits remedial activities; and a teacher who liberates the learner.[17]

Each of these qualities is desirable. Perhaps, each professional teacher exemplifies all of the identified qualities at some time. The difference may be detected in the degree to which the teacher acts upon each of the desired quality areas. Nevertheless, Hearn,[18] Buber,[19] and Ericksen[20] point to the important role played by human relationships in the teaching process. Hearn highlighted in the conclusions of his study the point that factors that relate to person-to-person relationships are closely allied to teaching competence.[21] Also, Goldhammer,[22] Jersild,[23]

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[17]Gerald A. Yoakam and Robert G. Simpson, Modern Methods And Techniques Of Teaching (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), pp. 11-15.

[18]Arthur C. Hearn, "Case Studies Of Successful Teachers", in Educational Administration And Supervision, 1952, Vol. 38, p. 376.

[19]Martin Buber, Between Man And Man, trans. by Ronald Gregor Smith (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 98.

[20]Stanford C. Ericksen, "Earning And Learning By The Hour," in Effective College Teaching, ed. William H. Morris (Washington: The American Association for Higher Education, 1970).

[21]Hearn, op. cit.

[22]Robert Goldhammer, Clinical Supervision (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969).

[23]Arthur T. Jersild, In Search Of Self (New York: Teachers College Press, 1952).

Flanders,[24] Ryans,[25] and Hamachek,[26] believe that the teacher's view of self is an indicator of his potential success with students. A positive view of self enhances teacher and student interaction and effectiveness.

Ultimately, the I-Thou Relationship espoused by Buber should be given serious consideration by teachers in the profession. For as Buber said, "Education is to be understood in terms of the communion between teacher and student because the development of the pupil as a person rests on the impact of one human being upon another..."[27]

Finally, as corrective measures for building greater teaching excellence, Ericksen suggests that the college teacher make his subject matter and instructional procedures relevant to a greater aspect of the discipline or to some aspects of society.[28] The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education suggested the adoption of "Codes Of Teaching Responsibility" to serve as a guide to faculty members in their conduct and to inform students of what they can expect.[29]

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[24]N. A. Flanders, Teacher Influence, Pupil Attitudes And Achievement: Studies In Interaction Analysis, University of Minnesota, U. S. Office of Education Cooperative Research Project No. 397, 1960.

[25]D. G. Ryans, "Prediction Of Teacher Effectiveness," in Encyclopedia Of Educational Research, 3rd Edition, New York: Macmillan, 1960.

[26]Don Hamachek, "Characteristics Of Good Teachers And The Implications For Teacher Education", in Teachers And The Learning Process, ed. Robert D. Strom (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), pp. 164-174.

[27]Martin Buber, I And Thou (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970) a new trans. by Walter Kaufmann.

[28]Ericksen, op. cit., p. 8.

[29]Priorities For Action: Final Report Of The Carnegie Commission On Higher Education (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973), p. 28.

There is no doubt that a process should be developed to lead toward excellence in teaching. Either one or both of the aforementioned recommendations could prove to be beneficial. They could also lead to a further encumberance to effective teaching. The answers are certainly not easily derived. At this point we can only continue to explore the problem and hope to arrive at more testable hypotheses and valid conclusions on what constitutes teaching excellence.

The following composite of characteristics, extrapolated from the literature review and derived from personal experiences, tend to suggest behaviors which are exemplary of excellent teachers. The degree of emphasis placed upon each "characteristics" area has not been determined and remains a topic for future pursuit. Nevertheless, these are characteristics which the excellent teacher models.

Commitment to the Profession: Commitment to the profession is exemplified in the teacher's scholarly activities. Research and publications serve as valid indicators of continuous growth in many instances. A commitment to the profession also suggests an ever increasing knowledge of subject area content.

Humaneness: This variable addresses the respect for the personhood of the student. It also suggests, in its undertone, a caring attitude and concern for others. This humaneness develops from a knowledge, awareness and understanding of other groups.

The Ability To Communicate: The goal of many faculty members is to address ideas in a direct and precise fashion so students can understand what is being said.

Reason: This area refers to the decision-making exercised by the faculty. Open-mindedness to information and the ability to process information

rationally are important factors in this area.

Advising And Counseling: These component areas provide an opportunity for teachers and students to build more substantial interpersonal relationships which can be far-reaching in its effects. The teacher is able to utilize his knowledge and experiences in counseling and advising students.

Time Invested in the Profession: For a person to become an excellent teacher, the aspirant must learn the art of effective teaching. Good teachers are not simply born but are indeed shaped and molded by their experiences. Each year the teacher grows in the profession and learns techniques which should qualify him as a better teacher than he was the previous year.

Organization and Direction: The teacher is the organizer and presenter of information to students. Therefore, for maximum effectiveness the teacher should organize all information and present it to students in a well planned manner. Also, the teacher should be available to offer directives to students for student growth and development.

Multicultural Person: This person, as teacher, shows no favoritism to students of a particular cultural group. Instead, this teacher is able to view each student singularly. He is also able to view the student's problem from dual perspectives.

Quality: Quality relates to the caliber of the information discussed and the teaching styles utilized. This area focuses on the range and scope of the specific teacher's knowledge. It also relates to the relevance of the teaching style and the flexibility of the teacher.

Substance: This area indicates the depth and breadth of the teacher's knowledge in his area. Particularly, it addresses the teacher's ability to integrate the interdisciplinary aspects of the curriculum into his

teaching.

The qualities discussed are simply viewed as characteristics, equal in importance to the definition of excellence.

Moving Toward Excellence In University Teaching

To move more swiftly toward excellence in university teaching, each faculty and administrator must make a commitment to help define the mission of the university and the courses to be included in the curriculum.

The Mission Of The University

The university mission statement cites the specific purpose and direction of the university. The question becomes that of determining the direction that universities of the future should take. Diverse philosophical leanings of the past influenced the mission and aims of the university. For example, Whitehead viewed education as "the acquisition of the art of the utilisation of knowledge."[30] He saw no virtue in a simply, well educated man. He stressed the need for educational institutions "producing men who possess both culture and expert knowledge in a specific direction."[31] Also, he cautioned educators to the proliferation of "inert ideas" which are simply "received into the mind without being utilised, or tested, or thrown into fresh combinations."[32]

Hutchins, on the other hand envisioned a college of the future whose emphasis would be on the intellectual and spiritual life versus scholarship. He drew upon Aristotle's view of education when he suggested that education should be the same everywhere. Hutchins said: "Education implies teaching.

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[30]Alfred North Whitehead, The Aims Of Education And Other Essays (New York: New American Library, 1949), pp. 13-26.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Ibid.

Teaching implies knowledge. Knowledge is truth. The truth is everywhere the same. Hence, education should be everywhere the same."[33]

Dewey defined the mission of the school as one to provide a simplified environment and to eliminate the unworthy features of the existing environment from influence upon "mental habitudes." Also, the school's role was to balance the various elements in the social environment, and to see to it that each individual gets an opportunity to escape from the limitations of the social group in which he was born.[34]

Gilman, however declared that "the object of the university is to develop character -- to make men."[35]

> It misses its aim if it produces learned pedants, or simple artisans, or cunning sophists, or pretentious practitioners. Its purport is not so much to impart knowledge to the pupils, as to whet the appetite, exhibit methods, develop powers, strengthen judgment, and invigorate the intellectual and moral forces. It should prepare for the service of a society a class of students who will be wise, thoughtful, and progressive guides in whatever department of work or thought they may be engaged.[36]

In his actual work experiences at Johns Hopkins University, Gilman emphasized research and publication for tenure and promotion because research encourages a pursuit for truth. He believed that a graduate-oriented university would be severely limited without research and publications.[37]

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[33]Hutchins, op. cit., p. 56.

[34]John Dewey, Democracy And Education (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1916).

[35]Daniel Coit Gilman, University Problems In The United States (New York: Century, 1898).

In the development of the university mission statement, fundamental questions must be addressed concerning the purpose of the university, the audience it is to serve and the needs (society or individual) it is to address. Coffey raised two significant questions regarding education for the future that educators should consider:

-Where should educators begin to generate goals which define the function of education?

-How can an educator begin to identify a practical point of departure which is also global? "Our schools do form a system where each part impacts all the others; so one is forced to take on the whole system at once if he wants to change it."[38]

These men were, obviously, influenced by their environment. The mission of universities must necessarily be shaped by the times in which we live. While drawing from helpful directives of the past is useful, we must remain cognizant of the times in which we live and our hopes for the future.

Our society has increasingly become a pluralistic one. Mass media and advanced technology have made the world an easily accessible one from one hemisphere to the other. Emphasis has to be placed on communication with and understanding of other cultures throughout the world. A university that neglects to place emphasis on the international world society in which we live is remiss in its aims. There is also a need for international language proficiency in the colleges and universities as one means of engendering greater knowledge and understanding of other cultures. Simon emphasizes the need for Foreign Language proficiency and suggests that

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[38]Daniel J. Coffey, "The Function Of Education In Our American Democracy Today: A Point Of Departure" in Selected Readings In Philosophy Of Education by Joe Park (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1974), p. 301.

American schools and universities devote the necessary attention in this area.[39]

The 1973 Carnegie Report on Higher Education states that Higher Education in the United States is one of the vanguard systems among those around the world; therefore, how well the United States system of education develops and in which direction, is, consequently, of more than national importance.[40] Further, the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education in 1973 referred to education being at the center of a society dependent upon high schools and of a society seeking to become more humane by aiding the development of each individual human personality. They suggested a need for more attention to quality, equal opportunity and to the effective governance and use of resources.[41] Priority areas that they cited, which remain essential to us today are: Clarification of purpose; preservation and enhancement of quality and diversity; advancement of social justice; enhancement of constructive change; achievement of more effective governance; and assurance of resources and their more effective use.[42]

The Curriculum Development Process

Educators must address the questions of who is the curriculum to serve? Will the curriculum be designed to meet the needs of society, the needs of the individual or to teach the disciplines? Who will be responsible for the curriculum development process? How will the curriculum developers be selected? Will or should the community have any input into university curriculum development? Should the curriculum continue to address nontraditional

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[39]Paul Simon, "The U. S. Crisis In Foreign Language" in The Annals (May 1980), Vol. 449, p. 31.

[40]Priorities For Action: Final Report Of The Carnegie Commission On Higher Education (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973), p. 17.

[41]Ibid., p. 23.

[42]Ibid.

courses? Many of these questions, however, will be resolved in the university mission statement.

Opinions vary regarding the precise approach one should take in developing an academically sound curriculum. It has been suggested that curriculum specialists need conceptual structures for the identification of the problems on which decisions have to be made. Not until these questions have been precisely stated can appropriate guidance be expected from the educational disciplines.[43]

A definition of curriculum development which has been most effectively outlined by Neagley and Evans suggests the following procedures: "organization of the curriculum committee(s); selection of objectives, aims, and goals of instruction; the designation of appropriate content, learning experiences, and teaching aids; the choosing of the best methods of instruction; the selection of the evaluation procedures commensurate with the designated objectives, aims, and goals; the trial and evaluation of these materials, learning experiences, and methods; the development of appropriate curriculum guides; and the provision of procedures for continuous study, evaluation, and improvement of the curriculum."[44]

The development of the final curriculum plan for the university will cause academicians to look more carefully at what is needed to enhance the knowledge of students and simultaneously meet the needs of society. Fincher suggests that there was difficulty in analyzing the curriculum trends

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[43] John F. Kerr, Changing The Curriculum (London: University of London Press Ltd., 1968), p. 9.

[44] Ross L. Neagley and N. Dean Evans, Handbook For Effective Curriculum Development (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), p. 5.

of the past because of the diverse viewpoints, methods of inquiry and backgrounds that planners brought to the process.[45]

Under the curriculum reform effort, educators should begin to focus on broad learning experiences and greater attention to creative arts and world cultures.[46] The Carnegie Commission referred to reform in three specific ways: toward more diversity of programs; more options for students; and enrichment of programs.[47]

The 1974 Carnegie Commission on Higher Education placed emphasis on the curriculum review in consultation with high school leaders to assess its broad relevance to the college curriculum. Included in the 1974 Report were recommendations to help improve the curriculum and faculty performance.[48]

The curriculum development process could serve as a most beneficial aspect of promoting excellence if teachers are free to participate in curriculum committee decisions. There should probably be equal representation from diverse groups in the interest of maintaining a university curriculum which fulfills the mission and philosophies of the university.

McLaughlin and Marsh imply that motivated teachers are needed to implement reform and change processes in the curriculum. They suggest that "the best educational practice is unlikely to fulfill its promise in the hands

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[45]Cameron Fincher, "Economic And Sociological Studies Of Educational Effects", in The Educational Forum, Vol. 53, January 1979, p. 139.

[46]Priorities for Action, op. cit., p. 28.

[47]Ibid., p. 46.

[48]A Digest Of Reports Of The Carnegie Commission On Higher Education, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974), p. 273.

of an inadequately trained or unmotivated teacher...The problem of reform or change is more a function of people and organizations than of technology."[49]

Thus, it is apparent that educators, administrators and curriculum specialists must work together to resolve the problems facing the university of the future. No longer can laissez faire approaches be used if our objective is to design a network which is structurally sound and which embraces concepts of excellence.

Summary

This paper explored excellence in teaching from an American University Professor's perspective, yet it has international application. Its basic premise suggests that there are variables that can be identified which reflect excellence regardless of the time in which one lives, the place of residence, or the geographic locale.

Further, this paper raised questions about who can become an effective teacher. If the qualities and characteristics that were identified hold true, then some persons will simply have great difficulty achieving excellence. This idea would not have surprised Aristotle 2300 years ago and should not surprise us today.

Finally, the mission of the university and the curriculum development process were explored as avenues which could lead to more faculty confidence and more quality faculty productivity.

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[49] A Digest Of Reports Of The Carnegie Commission On Higher Education, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974), p. 273.

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